

Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review

Implementation Communication Package



Department of the Interior



Department of Agriculture

July 1996

Introduction

This plan outlines a national communication strategy for the implementation of recommendations contained in the final report of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review dated December 18, 1995 (Fire Policy Report). Because the Fire Policy Review directly affects five land management agencies in two Departments, communication emphasis may not be *consistent* nationwide but should be *compatible*. This plan and its attachments were created with that in mind – they are very broad in nature and in most cases do not reflect specific assignments. They are intended to offer a "menu" of communication strategies and tools. All messages, tools, and methods may not be appropriate for all audiences.

Specific implementation actions are described in the May 23, 1996, Implementation Action Plan (Action Plan).

The Guiding Principles (Attachment 1) are considered fundamental to the success of the Federal wildland fire management program and should be incorporated into all public affairs and outreach activities as well.

While the umbrella policies (Attachment 2) are a key part of the Fire Policy Report and may tend to become the focal point for discussions, the narrative sections of the report, including the goals and actions, provide context and help convey the history, current situation, and long-term goals for the program.

Background

The Federal Wildland Fire Policy and Program Review was chartered by the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior on December 30, 1994. It was prompted by the following:

- √ The severity of the 1994 fire season resulted in an increased awareness of the dangers of fire and the natural role of wildland fire.
- √ At an October 1994 House Agriculture and Natural Resources hearing, the two Departments were asked to jointly address wildland fire issues.
- √ The South Canyon Fire Interagency Management Review Team recommended that land management agencies examine several issues related to wildland fire.
- √ In August 1994, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and Cabinet Affairs requested a nationwide review of wildland fire issues.
- √ The agencies themselves recognized the need to address forest and rangeland health and the increasing magnitude and severity of wildland fires.

The review was jointly conducted by the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior. The principal agencies involved were the USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs. Others who participated were the National Biological Service, Environmental Protection Agency, National Weather Service, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The findings and recommendations were accepted and endorsed by both the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture in December 1995.

Goals/Objectives

1. The goals of the *Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review* are to ensure that:
 - a. Firefighter and public safety is the first priority in all wildland fire management actions.
 - b. Wildland fire is reintroduced into the ecosystem as a critical natural process.
 - c. Federal agency fire management policies are uniform, compatible, and cohesive and enhance efficient interagency cooperation.
 - d. Wildland fire is managed consistently across agency jurisdictional boundaries, with the involvement of all partners.
 - e. Policies and programs are based on sound scientific, ecological, and economic principles.
 - f. Policies and programs incorporate the experience of the past, reflect today's values, and be able to adapt to the challenges of the future.
 - g. Communication and collaboration are emphasized in all actions and cooperative relationships are strengthened.
 - h. Federal wildland fire management policies and programs
 - (1) recognize that public and private values are at high risk
 - (2) are responsive to the complexity and magnitude of the current threat of catastrophic wildland fire
 - (3) encourage and facilitate a more proactive approach to wildland fire management.
 - i. The role of Federal agencies in the Wildland/Urban Interface is clarified to include wildland firefighting, hazard fuels reduction, cooperative prevention and education, and technical assistance.
 - j. More emphasis is placed on educating internal and external audiences about how and why we use and manage wildland fire.
 - k. Clarify the responsibility and accountability of employees and managers in the fire management program.
2. The goal of the *Implementation Communications Plan* is to gain the understanding and support of employees, neighboring land owners, Tribal governments, partners, cooperators, interest groups, and other interested parties as the Federal agencies work with them to implement the recommendations of the Fire Policy Report. The objectives are to inform key internal and external audiences about the policies, principles, and recommendations and to communicate the implementation strategies outlined in the Action Plan.

Key Audiences - Internal

(Note: Intended as examples only; audiences may differ by agency and by geographic area.)

1. Federal Land Management Agencies (Bureau of Land Management, USDA Forest Service, National Park Service, Fish & Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs)
 - a. Agency Administrators and Managers
 - b. Employees in Wildland Fire-Related Positions
 - c. Program Leaders and Staff in other Resource Disciplines
 - d. Planning Staff
 - e. Public Affairs Specialists
 - f. Legislative Coordinators
 - g. Environmental Education Specialists
 - h. Scientists
2. Other Federal Cooperators (Department of Defense, National Weather Service, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Environmental Protection Agency)
3. Other Partners (State Foresters, National Association of State Foresters, State Fire Marshals, and Tribal Governments)

Objectives

1. Inform and educate employees about the recommendations and actions resulting from the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review.
2. Increase understanding of the long-term economic, ecological, and social benefits of the goals of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review.
3. Enlist the support of Agency Administrators, managers, and employees at all levels to protect valuable property and resources from wildland fire disasters while safely and effectively managing wildland fire as a critical natural process.
4. Encourage all employees to become ambassadors to gain the support of external audiences.
5. Emphasize how and why Fire Policy recommendations should be incorporated into all planning and management activities in order to meet the stated goals.
6. Obtain feedback on innovative ways to meet the stated goals and objectives, barriers to successful implementation, and suggestions on how to overcome those barriers.

Messages

1. Federal land management agencies now have, for the first time, one set of “umbrella” policies to guide Federal wildland fire management.
2. Public and firefighter safety continues to be the top priority.
3. Placing natural resources and property at the same level – as the second protection priority after human safety – will give managers more flexibility to consider relative values in their decision making.

4. The use of wildland fire as a management tool must be incorporated into the resource and fire management planning systems. Every area subject to wildland fires must be covered by an approved Fire Management Plan that is responsive to land and resource management plan objectives, and any action on a wildland fire must be based upon direction in an approved Fire management Plan.
 - The reintroduction of fire into the ecosystem as a critical natural process is based on sound science and adaptive management and will result in ecological and economic benefits.
5. Wildland fire must be managed on a landscape scale, across agency jurisdictions.
6. Successful implementation will require the involvement and support of all partners – from all levels and disciplines – in every aspect of fire management, e.g., planning, preparedness, suppression, use, monitoring, research, and prevention.
7. The Federal government is a partner in wildland/urban interface protection, including firefighting, fuels reduction, education, and technical assistance; structural fire protection is generally the responsibility of others – in some cases, Tribal, State, and local governments. All interface areas must be covered by Fire Protection Agreements that reflect the appropriate responsibilities.
8. More emphasis will be placed on fire management qualifications and job performance standards for agency administrators and fire program managers and staff.
9. Trained, certified employees will participate in the fire management program, others will support it, and managers will be held accountable.

Tools and Methods

1. Distribute Implementation Action Plan, along with agency-specific instructions and this communication package, to all agency field offices.
2. Make use of Internal Brochure, Fact Sheet, Q&A's, and other appropriate tools to inform employees about their role in Fire Policy implementation.
3. Consider an interagency satellite teleconference, produced at the BLM's National Training Center in Phoenix, to include a panel discussion by the five agency fire directors followed by interactive questions and answers. This would be broadcast to field offices via C-Band transmission, which can be picked up by a standard satellite dish. Entire presentation could be videotaped at receiving locations and/or by the National Training Center staff for additional distribution. Total cost for production and uplink would be less than \$10,000.
4. Assign a top-level interagency team to discuss the Fire Policy Review and implementation at appropriate state-level meetings, i.e., fire staff conferences, public affairs conferences, management team meetings, etc.
5. Agency fire leaders meet with appropriate management groups (personal, teleconference, video, etc.) to inform them about the Fire Policy Review and implementation, emphasize their roles and responsibilities, enlist their support, and get their feedback.
6. Local managers are responsible for maintaining two-way communications with employees throughout implementation.

7. Involve leadership/management teams in all phases of implementation, but particularly as the use of wildland fire is incorporated into resource/land management planning and Fire Management Plans are developed.
8. Agency Administrators and managers convey the history, current situation, long-term goals, and implementation actions, including individual responsibilities, to all employees.
9. Develop internal mechanisms for sharing implementation updates with employees, including regular updates from top-level fire management officials.
10. Utilize existing communication tools (conference calls, newsletters, videos, agency director messages, all-employee meetings, etc.) to maintain and enhance communications.
11. Share success stories and innovative implementation actions.

Key Audiences - External

(Note: Intended as examples only; audiences may differ by agency and by geographic area.)

1. Congressional/Legislative
2. Other State, Local, and Tribal Entities
 - a. State Agencies (Wildlife, Fish/Game, Commerce, Environment, Water Resources, Agriculture, Recreation)
 - b. Governors
 - c. Western Governors' Association
 - d. Western States Land Commissioners' Association
 - e. County Commissioners, Planners, and Other Appropriate County Agencies/Organizations
 - f. National Association of County Organizations
 - g. National Association of Conservation Districts
 - h. Tribal Governments
 - i. Intertribal Timber Council
3. Key Public/User Groups
 - a. General
 - (1) Advisory Councils
 - (2) Environmental/Conservation Groups
 - (3) Industry Groups (Livestock, Timber, Mining, Agriculture, etc.)
 - (4) Recreation Groups
 - (5) Wildlife Groups
 - (6) Respondents to Requests for Public Comments

b. Specific

- (1) Natural Resources Defense Council
- (2) Quincy Library Group
- (3) American Forests
- (4) Cascadia Fire Ecology Education Project
- (5) The Wilderness Society
- (6) Greater Yellowstone Coalition
- (7) Forest Industries Councils
- (8) The Nature Conservancy
- (9) Congressional Fire Caucus
- (10) Public Lands Foundation
- (11) Congressional Fire Services Institute
- (12) Western Senate Coalition
- (13) Georgia-Pacific Corporation
- (14) WESTAR
- (15) Sierra Club
- (16) Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- (17) National Cattlemen's Association
- (18) National Wool Growers' Association
- (19) National Parks and Conservation Association

4. Professional Organizations

- a. Society of American Foresters
- b. Society for Range Management
- c. Wildlife Society
- d. Society for Ecological Restoration
- e. Natural Areas Association
- f. National Wildfire Suppression Association
- g. International Association of Fire Fighters
- h. National Volunteer Fire Council
- i. International Association of Fire Chiefs

5. Education Groups

- a. National Science Teachers' Association
- b. North American Association for Environmental Education
- c. Education Committee, National Association of Conservation Districts
- d. Extension Offices, Department of Agriculture
- e. State and Local Education Associations
- f. National Environmental Education and Training Foundation
- g. Western Regional Environmental Education Council

6. Wildland/Urban Interface Interests

- a. Insurance Institute for Policy Loss Reduction
- b. National Home Builders' Association
- c. State Fire Marshals
- d. Planning and Zoning Commissions
- e. Rural Fire Departments

- f. Volunteer Fire Departments
- g. Homeowners/Homeowners' Associations

Objectives

1. Increase understanding of the long-term economic, ecological, and social benefits of the goals of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review.
2. Enlist the support and assistance of education and other professionals in educating the public about the positive roles and possible negative impacts of wildland fire.
3. Generate support, cooperation, and assistance in protecting valuable property and resources from wildland fire disasters, while safely and effectively managing wildland fire as a tool and critical natural process to enhance the long-term health of the land.
4. Enlist support and assistance in reducing the hazards and risks from wildland fire in the wildland/urban interface.
5. Make residents of wildland/urban interface communities aware of their responsibility to protect their homes from wildland fire.
6. Garner support for and involvement in partnerships to develop hazard-mitigation plans with the ultimate goal of reducing losses in the wildland/urban interface.

Messages

1. Public and firefighter safety continues to be the top priority.
2. Successful implementation will require the involvement and support of partners, cooperators, landowners, and communities.
3. Federal land management agencies now have, for the first time, one set of "umbrella" policies to guide Federal wildland fire management.
4. More emphasis will be placed on using wildland fire to maintain/enhance resources and allowing it to function in its natural role, with the ultimate goal being the long-term health of land and resources. All audiences must receive a clear message about the important role of fire as a natural process and the risks and consequences of its use and exclusion.
 - Research provides a sound scientific basis for the integration of wildland fire into land-use and resource management.
 - Integrating fire into land management is not a one-time, immediate fix but a continual, long-term process. It is not an end in itself but rather a means to a more healthy end.
5. Smokey Bear's fire prevention message is still valid; everyone must take responsibility for preventing unwanted wildland fires that may have adverse effects. However that message must be balanced with accurate information about the ecological benefits of fire.

6. Wildland fire must be managed on a landscape scale, across management boundaries.
 - Fire management practices must be consistent/compatible in areas with similar management objectives, regardless of jurisdiction.
7. The Federal government is a partner in wildland/urban interface protection. Its role includes firefighting; fuels reduction (reducing the amount of highly flammable live and dead vegetation) on Federal lands adjacent to the interface; education; and technical assistance. Structural fire protection is generally the responsibility of others – often Tribal, State, and local governments. Homeowners in the wildland/urban interface are responsible for making their homes fire safe.
8. Through partnerships, Federal agencies will work with others to focus on wildland/urban interface issues.
 - The Western Governors' Association will serve as a catalyst for involving State agencies, as well as local and private stakeholders, in the wildland/urban interface, with the objective of developing an implementation plan to achieve a uniform, integrated approach to hazard and risk assessment and fire prevention and protection.
 - The National Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Protection Program (includes Department of the Interior, Department of Agriculture, FEMA's U.S. Fire Administration, National Association of State Foresters, National Association of State Fire Marshals, and National Fire Protection Association) will serve as a forum for focusing on interface issues.
9. Federal agencies will place more emphasis on establishing partnerships with fire management contractors, cooperators, and others, encouraging and assisting them to adopt and implement Federal standards for training, qualifications, firefighting equipment, personal protective equipment, etc.
10. Federal fire management agencies will look at new ways of doing business, with more emphasis on internal and external communications.

Tools and Methods

1. Distribute Implementation Action Plan, external brochure, press release, and other communication tools to appropriate audiences, along with information about how they may be specifically involved and/or affected.
2. Agency Administrators and managers meet with appropriate external groups to inform them about the Fire Policy Review and implementation, enlist their support, and get their suggestions and feedback. Involve public affairs offices in decisions about what contacts to make and what communication tools to use, e.g., Fact Sheet, Q&A's, External Brochure, etc.
3. Brief key government and community leaders and set up a mechanism to keep them updated on key actions or those with local implications. Send advance copies of press releases and other outreach materials as appropriate.
4. Issue national and local press releases; mail copies to interested/affected parties.
5. Invite news media to do feature stories.

6. Schedule field trips to show positive/negative effects of fire, using recent and historical fire sites as well as prescribed fire projects. Make use of Fact Sheet, Q&A's, External Brochure, and other tools.
7. Be proactive about involving partners, cooperators, and neighbors in decisions that will affect them.
8. Look for ways to incorporate the "role-of-fire" message into existing outreach materials. Avoid negative terms, such as damage, devastation, destroyed, etc., in releases and discussions about fire; balance with message about fire's positive role whenever possible. Explain why fire is good at some specific times and in some specific places and when and why it can be bad. Explain why rehabilitation is necessary after some fires, while some fires have positive effects. Be sensitive about sending conflicting messages.
9. Use ongoing fire situations to deliver Fire Policy messages.
10. Incorporate Fire Policy message into regularly scheduled meetings with, or mailings to, external groups and individuals, using prepared tools; encourage two-way communications.
11. Share success stories and innovative implementation actions.
12. Develop local contact lists based on target audiences; use for mailings, personal contacts, etc.
13. Inform advisory councils about the Fire Policy Review and involve them in implementation as appropriate.

Attachments:

- 1 - Sample Press Release
- 2 - External Brochure
- 3 - Internal Brochure
- 4 - Fact Sheet
- 5 - Questions & Answers

Draft press release to be used as is or localized as appropriate.

Land Management Agencies Implement Federal Fire Policy

Federal land and resource management agencies are gradually shifting the emphasis of their wildland fire management programs, based on the findings and recommendations of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review. Agencies include the USDA Forest Service and four Department of the Interior agencies: the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs.

A final report was issued in December 1995 following a year of intense study by an interdepartmental team of specialists, including fire ecology and management experts. According to Les Rosenkrance, Director of Fire and Aviation for the Bureau of Land Management, this landmark document incorporates the wisdom and experience of the past, reflects today's values, and prepares agencies to meet land management challenges of the future.

"First and foremost, the report reconfirms that public and firefighter safety is the top priority," Rosenkrance said. "It focuses on a wide variety of environmental and operational issues that ultimately contribute to human safety in a wildfire situation."

The report also places property and resource values on the same level, as the second priority. "This gives managers more flexibility," said Rosenkrance, "to make better decisions based on values to be protected." Previous policies put property values ahead of resource values in all situations.

Throughout the report, major emphasis is placed on returning fire to the ecosystem – allowing it to function, as nearly as possible, in its natural role and using it to achieve goals of ecosystem health. "Over the past century, we have not allowed fire to play its natural role in the environment," Rosenkrance explained. "Now heavy accumulations of dead trees, brush, and other vegetation are causing fires to move more rapidly and burn more intensely. The challenge of managing wildland fire in the United States has rapidly become more complex."

According to Dr. Mary Jo Lavin, Director of Fire and Aviation for the USDA Forest Service, Wildland/urban interface protection is also a major focus of the report. "It places more emphasis on developing and updating Fire Protection Agreements to accurately reflect federal responsibility," she said. The report defines the federal responsibility as fighting wildland fires; reducing fuel

hazards (dead and dying trees, shrubs, and grasses) on public lands adjacent to residential areas; and providing prevention, education, and technical assistance to state, local, and private entities. Lavin said the report further clarifies that structural fire protection is generally the responsibility of others – in some cases, Tribes, states, and local governments.

The review designates the Western Governors' Association as a catalyst for involving state agencies, as well as local and private interests, in the wildland/urban interface. It also recommends using the National Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Protection Program, which includes Federal and State cooperators, as a forum for focusing on wildland/urban interface issues.

"While the wildland fire program has always changed and evolved in response to current needs," Rosenkrance said, "the recommendations in this report create a solid framework for enhancing cooperation among land management agencies as they continue to work together toward the same goals, using consistent, compatible processes."

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt and Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman accepted the team's report in December and released it publicly in February 1996. A top-level interagency management oversight team will direct the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report.

decisions based solely on what's best for the land or what would be most efficient or even most effective. Families — their homes, their pets, and their valued possessions — must be an important part of the equation.

This is not a new problem, but it's becoming a bigger problem. And it's not a problem any single agency or organization can solve alone. Federal, State, Tribal, and local land management agencies, city and county planners, homeowners, insurance companies, planning and zoning organizations, and others must work together to find better answers.

Unfortunately, most people don't think a wildland fire will destroy their home . . . until it's too late. So agencies must place more emphasis on helping the public understand the hazards and risks in the wildland/urban interface and what can be done to reduce those risks.



Ultimately, homeowners in the wildland/urban interface must take responsibility for protecting themselves.

There are many things they can do to reduce the risk to their homes and their families. They can use fire-resistant building materials, create a fuel break around their property, plan access and exit routes, and generally prepare themselves in case a fire threatens their home. Federal agencies' role is to help minimize the hazards by reducing fuels adjacent to communities, to help with fire prevention and education, and to provide technical assistance.

When a fire starts, their job is wildland firefighting. Structural fire protection is generally the responsibility of other local entities.

WHAT IS IT?



AND HOW DOES IT AFFECT ME?

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT

WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT

OR THE FEDERAL WILDLAND

FIRE MANAGEMENT POLICY

AND PROGRAM REVIEW,

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL

LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCY.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT



USDA FOREST SERVICE



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS



NATIONAL INTERAGENCY
FIRE CENTER
3833 S. DEVELOPMENT AVE.
BOISE, IDAHO 83705-5354

FEDERAL WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROGRAM REVIEW

ANSWERS FOR
PUBLIC LAND USERS
AND NEIGHBORS

WHY THE REVIEW WAS DONE



A lot of things came together during the 1994 fire season to create a renewed awareness about the impacts of wildland fire. Thirty-four firefighters died, fourteen of them on the South Canyon Fire in Colorado. In the aftermath of that incident, the Interagency Management Review Team recommended that Federal fire

management agencies examine some specific issues related to wildland fire. And the agencies themselves recognized the need to address forest and rangeland health and the increasing magnitude and severity of wildland fires.

In December 1994, a review was chartered by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture and conducted jointly by the USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs. The National Biological Service, Environmental Protection Agency, National Weather Service, and Federal Emergency Management Agency also participated. A final report was completed in December 1995.

WHAT THE REPORT SAYS

The report reaffirms that public and firefighter safety is the top priority. It places property and resource values together as the second priority, giving managers the flexibility to make better decisions based on values to be protected.

The report recognizes that past land use practices and a century of fire suppression have resulted in an unhealthy build-up of dead and dying vegetation. It contains recommendations for the careful return of fire to the ecosystem — allowing it to function as nearly as possible in its natural role and using it across agency boundaries to achieve long-term goals of ecosystem health.

Wildland/urban interface protection is also a major focus of the report, placing more emphasis on developing and updating fire protection agreements to accurately reflect Federal and other responsibilities.

The report outlines the very first set of “umbrella” Federal fire management policies. It creates a solid framework for enhancing cooperation among Federal land and resource management agencies as they continue to work together toward common goals, using consistent, compatible processes. It sets the stage for improving the way fire is managed for the long-term health and sustainability of the land.

FIRE'S ROLE

Mother Nature's plan was for small, low-intensity fires to cleanse the land every now and then. But instead, humans have been interfering with her plan and, in the process, have created unhealthy ecosystems with lots of natural debris — a little like never dusting or vacuuming. This is creating a domino effect. Now fires are burning hotter and faster. Native vegetation is often replaced by non-native species, which in turn affects other pieces of the ecosystem puzzle, like insects and disease, wildlife habitat, and water supplies. And land management agencies are struggling to manage ecosystems that need help.

Our goal is to slowly and carefully reintroduce fire to the wildlands, much like Mother Nature had planned all along. But we have more things to consider as we do that — things like people's homes, their livelihoods, their recreation . . . the very air they breathe. It's no small task, and it won't be done overnight.

BUT WHAT ABOUT SMOKEY BEAR?

Smokey is right on. He's always talked about being responsible, and no one can argue with that. Fire is a very powerful force; unleashed in the wrong place at the wrong time, it can be very dangerous. Human-caused wildfires are almost always in the wrong place at the wrong time. They usually threaten homes, campgrounds, and other values we want to protect. And they are often started at the very worst time of year, when fuels are at their driest, and burn everything in their path. That's why Smokey still wants us to be careful with matches and campfires.

PRESCRIBED FIRE: MEDICINE FOR THE LAND

When we're sick, a doctor looks at our symptoms, assesses our general health, writes a prescription, and sets some parameters: three pills a day, drink lots of water, and get plenty of rest. Land managers look at the health of the land and describe management objectives in a land management plan. If an ecosystem isn't healthy, they sometimes decide fire is the right tool, or medicine, to make it better. Then they write a detailed plan — a prescription — that sets strict parameters for using fire to accomplish their objectives: fire will help the land here at certain times of the year and under certain conditions . . . it will be harmful there . . . and homes must be protected somewhere else.

Scientists and land managers have put a lot of thought and research into figuring out how a fire behaves and why. They can usually tell how certain grasses and shrubs will burn based on moisture content, weather conditions, and years of scientific research and experience.



Sometimes managers will ignite a fire to improve the health of the land. And sometimes they will decide, based on a land management plan, that a lightning-caused fire is part of Mother Nature's plan and that it will, in the long run, benefit the land and resources. Fire is just one of many tools a land manager can use to help the land recover or stay healthy.

WILDLAND/URBAN INTERFACE

More and more people are moving away from the city, away from people and traffic, away from noise . . . and away from things they generally take for granted, like fire protection. A house or a group of houses in an otherwise undeveloped area can turn a routine wildland fire into a nightmare for firefighters and homeowners. Fire managers are unable to make tactical

WHAT IS THE URGENCY?

Over the past century, land-use practices and our good efforts to suppress all fires have slowly but surely changed the face of the landscape. Dead vegetation has accumulated unnaturally in many places, and we are now faced with the reality of larger, more severe wildland fires. Not only are these intense wildland fires dangerous and difficult to control, but they are generally much more harmful to the resources than the low-intensity fires Mother Nature intended as a housekeeping tool.

The increasing challenge of protecting wildland/urban interface areas needs immediate attention. This is not a new problem, and we've been struggling for many years to find a solution. Federal agencies cannot solve this problem alone, but they can work with state and local organizations, communities, and homeowners to help close the growing gap between the problem and the solution.

KEY POINTS OF THE REPORT

- ▶ Reconfirms that public and firefighter safety is the top priority.
- ▶ Adjusts protection priorities from a strict 1 - human life, 2 - property, and 3 - resource values to 1 - human life and 2 - property and natural/cultural resources, based on relative values to be protected.
- ▶ Creates a framework for allowing fire to function, as nearly as possible, in its natural ecological role and for using fire to achieve goals of ecosystem health.
- ▶ Places heavy emphasis on partnerships within the Federal fire management agencies; with State, Tribal, and local governments; and with the private sector.
- ▶ Directs agencies to jointly develop programs to expand the use of prescribed fire in fire-dependent ecosystems.

- ▶ Requires that fire management goals and objectives be set forth in land and resource management plans.

- ▶ Requires that every area subject to wildland fires be covered by a Fire Management Plan that is responsive to land and resource management plan objectives.

- ▶ Asks Federal agencies to ensure that all wildland/urban interface areas are covered by Fire Protection Agreements, to renegotiate existing agreements as needed to reflect a Federal responsibility that is compatible with current policy, and to ensure that State and local responsibilities are apportioned appropriately.

- ▶ Clarifies that structural fire protection is generally the responsibility of Tribes, States, and local governments and identifies the Federal responsibility as wildland firefighting, hazard fuels reduction, and cooperative prevention, education, and technical assistance.

- ▶ Utilizes the Western Governors' Association as a catalyst for involving State agencies as well as local and private stakeholders in the wildland/urban interface; recommends using the National Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Protection Program, which includes Federal and State cooperators, as a forum for focusing on wildland/urban interface issues.

FEDERAL WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT POLICY & PROGRAM REVIEW

For more information about wildland fire management or the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review, contact your local agency administrator or fire program manager.

Bureau of Land Management · USDA Forest Service · National Park Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service · Bureau of Indian Affairs
National Interagency Fire Center



FEDERAL WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROGRAM REVIEW

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ME AND MY JOB?

ABOUT THE REVIEW



The Federal Wildland Fire Policy and Program Review was chartered by the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior on December 30, 1994.

The principal agencies involved were the USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs. Others who participated were the National Biological Service, Environmental Protection Agency, National Weather Service, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The December 18, 1996, final report contains more than 80 recommended action items. These actions will ultimately result in improved firefighter and public safety, reduced costs and losses, and a wider acceptance, both internally and externally, of the important role that wildland fire plays in the management of our public lands.

Resource managers have been steadily moving in this direction for some time because it makes sense, but each agency has been doing it within its own boundaries, at its own pace, and based on its own agency-specific policies. The Fire Policy Report outlines for the first time a set of "umbrella" Federal fire management policies and creates a solid framework for enhancing cooperation among land management agencies. While it provides Federal agencies with broad parameters, however, it does not prohibit them from implementing agency-specific fire management programs and activities.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION?

The May 23, 1996, Implementation Action Plan outlines a strategy for implementing the recommendations of the Fire Policy Report. It is very clear

about who is responsible for what: the Management Oversight Team, Federal Fire and Aviation Leadership Council, National Wildfire Coordinating Group, Geographic Area Coordination Groups, Agency Administrators, special teams and task forces, and in some cases, specific individuals.

But this review wasn't done so teams could meet and more reports could be prepared. It was done to improve the health of the land and do it safely. That means every employee must get involved and do his or her part. It's what happens on the ground that counts!

So it's everyone's responsibility, led and supported by Agency Administrators. Your role may be in one or more of the following areas of emphasis:

▲ Agency Administrators must get involved, demonstrate their support, hold employees accountable, and be accountable themselves. We cannot be successful without commitment by top-level managers.

▲ Firefighter and public safety remains the first priority. Once people are safe, the second protection priority is property and natural/cultural resources, based on their relative values. This is a change from previous priorities and must be coordinated with local partners.

▲ Be responsible to educate yourself and others — coworkers, customers, and neighbors — about fire's role as a critical natural process in the ecosystem and about the long-term economic, ecological, and social benefits that can come from a compatible, cohesive Federal wildland fire program.

▲ The planning process is a critical factor if we are to make progress on the ground...and not just fire planning. Agencies must work closely with each other to ensure their *land and resource* planning processes are compatible and, when appropriate, to ensure that fire management objectives are consistent across agency jurisdictions.

Land and resource management plans and activity plans must incorporate fire as a tool to achieve resource management objectives and consider the impacts of fire exclusion.

All areas subject to wildland fires must be covered by an approved Fire Management Plan, developed with the full participation of all partners, which will describe fire management goals and objectives and present a range of options for dealing with fires when they occur.

▲ Working with our partners is a key part of fire policy implementation, whether we're working on Fire Management Plans, Fire Protection Agreements, prescribed fire, prevention, education, preparedness or severity planning, training, qualifications, equipment, or any other aspect of fire management. We must place more emphasis on communicating and working with our neighbors, cooperators, and partners.

▲ More emphasis will be placed on properly planning and conducting prescribed fire projects. This includes working with partners to assess the need for prescribed fire, the probability of success or failure, and the potential positive and negative consequences. And Agency Administrators and managers must support employees who implement a properly planned and conducted prescribed fire program, even if there are unplanned results.

▲ Everyone has an obligation to participate in and support the fire management program in whatever way they can. Trained, certified employees will participate in the wildland fire program, and others will provide support. Agency Administrators will be held accountable for results.

We can all help find innovative ways to meet the goals and objectives of the fire policy review; the use of wildland fire crosses all functional boundaries. Every person has skills and experience that can contribute to its success.

Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review

Fact Sheet

Background

1. The review was chartered on December 30, 1994, by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture and conducted jointly by both Departments.
2. Principal agencies involved in the review were the USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs. Others who participated were the National Biological Service, Environmental Protection Agency, National Weather Service, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.
3. The review was prompted by several factors, including:
 - The severity of the 1994 fire season, which resulted in increased awareness and concern about the dangers of wildfire and the natural role of wildland fire among natural resource agencies and the public.
 - The outcome of an October 4, 1994, House Agriculture and Natural Resources hearing that established a national commitment by the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior to address wildland fire issues.
 - Recommendations from the October 17, 1994, Report of the South Canyon Interagency Management Review Team that issues of preparedness, fuels management, and wildland/urban interface fire protection be examined.
 - An August 1994 request by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and Cabinet Affairs for a nationwide review of wildland fire issues.
 - Internal concerns stemming from the increasing magnitude and severity of wildland fires and issues revolving around the use of wildland fire to restore forest and rangeland health.
4. Employees and the public were invited to comment during the scoping process in January 1995 and again when the draft report was released in June 1995. Comments were used in formulating the December 18, 1995, final report.
5. The findings and recommendations were accepted and endorsed by Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman and Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt in December 1995. The report was released publicly on February 14, 1996.

What the Report Says - Key Points

1. Reaffirms that firefighter and public safety is #1 priority.
2. Requires that fire management goals and objectives be set forth in land and resource management plans and that fire occurrence be considered as a tool in achieving resource management objectives.
3. Focuses on the use of wildland fire to maintain/enhance resources by allowing it to function in its natural role.
4. Defines wildland fire as a critical natural process, not necessarily as a wildfire (bad) or a prescribed fire (good).
5. Directs agencies to jointly develop programs to expand the use of prescribed fire in fire-dependent ecosystems.
6. Encourages an organizational climate that supports employees who implement a properly planned and conducted prescribed fire program, even when projects may have unfavorable outcomes.
7. Emphasizes hazard reduction to improve the health of the land and to prevent large-scale, high-intensity fires.
8. Requires that Fire Management Plans be developed for every acre with burnable vegetation and that those plans be closely linked to land and resource management plans and include the full range of fire management actions.
9. Requires that any action on a wildland fire be based upon direction in the Fire Management Plan.
10. Gives managers the flexibility to make better decisions about the negative and positive impacts of wildland fire and to choose from the full spectrum of fire management actions available.
11. Shifts preparedness emphasis to include ensuring the capability is in place to support land and resource management plans rather than focusing primarily on fire suppression and protection.
12. Reinforces that fire suppression actions must be conducted with a high regard for firefighter and public safety and consistent with resource objectives.
13. Clarifies that trained, certified employees will participate in the fire management program, others will provide support, and administrators will be held accountable.
14. Adjusts protection priorities from a strict (1) human life (2) property (3) resource values to (1) human life and (2) property and natural resources, providing the flexibility for managers to set priorities based on the relative values of property and natural/cultural resources.
15. Broadens the emphasis of interagency cooperation to all aspects of the fire program – planning, preparedness, suppression, use, monitoring, research, prevention, etc., rather than focusing primarily on protection.

16. Requires that economic efficiency considerations include commodity, non-commodity, and social values.
17. Clarifies that the Federal government is a partner in wildland/urban interface issues, including firefighting, fuels reduction, education, and technical assistance, and that structural fire protection is generally the responsibility of others, including Tribal, State, and local governments. Requires that all wildland/urban interface areas be covered by Fire Protection Agreements that define responsibilities.
18. Utilizes the Western Governors' Association as a catalyst for involving State agencies, as well as local and private stakeholders, in the wildland/urban interface; recommends using the National Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Protection Program, which includes Federal and State cooperators, as a forum for focusing on wildland/urban interface issues.
19. Emphasizes continued cooperation with partners to prevent unauthorized ignition of wildland fire.
20. Places more emphasis on forming partnerships and otherwise informing, involving, and working with others – employees; Federal, Tribal, State, and local partners; cooperators; homeowners; private entities; and the public – in all aspects of wildland fire management.
21. Sets the stage for eliminating administrative barriers in the areas of funding, hiring, training, accountability, data collection and reporting, and resource and fire management planning.
22. Directs Federal agencies to establish fire management qualification standards for agency administrator, fire program manager, and other fire management positions and to staff those positions with individuals who are qualified and committed to accomplishing the total fire management program. Further directs that job performance standards be developed that clearly reflect the complexity and scope of fire management responsibilities and that agency administrators and fire program managers be held accountable for conducting the fire program in accordance with established policies, procedures, standards, and direction.

Implementation

1. In December 1995, the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture endorsed the principles, policies, and recommendations of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review. They directed that implementation be based on the following criteria:
 - Ensure consistency with the nine Guiding Principles contained in the Report.
 - Implement on a joint, interagency basis wherever possible to ensure the consistent application of policy.
 - Involve a broad spectrum of program areas, including resource managers, agency administrators, scientists, and planners, as well as the wildland fire management staffs.
 - Address local interagency integrated planning as a critical means of ensuring that on-the-ground implementation is as effective as possible.
 - Coordinate with other Federal agencies, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Department of Defense.

- Ensure coordination with Tribal, State, and local partners.
 - Recognize the results of the wildland/urban interface project sponsored by the Western Governors' Association.
2. The four Interior agencies and the USDA's Forest Service established a Management Oversight Team (MOT) to oversee the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report. That team consists of:
- Les Rosenkrance*, Director, Office of Fire and Aviation, Bureau of Land Management
Joan Comanor, Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry, USDA Forest Service
Maureen Finnerty, Associate Director, Park Operations and Education, National Park Service
Carolyn Bohan, Deputy Assistant Director for Refuges and Wildlife, Fish and Wildlife Service
Terry Virden, Acting Director, Trust Responsibilities, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Dennis Fenn, Deputy Director, National Biological Service
Donald Artley, State Forester, Montana Department of State Lands
Bill Leenhouts, Executive Secretary
3. An Implementation Action Plan was finalized on May 23, 1996, with input from field-level line officers and fire program managers. The plan divides action items into three categories:
- a. Action Items to be Implemented Immediately at the Geographic Area Coordinating Group Level - Federal agencies are ultimately responsible for implementing action items; however, there may be action items that adversely affect partners, such as State agencies, due to legal or budgetary constraints. Within each Geographic Area, federal agencies will develop an action plan, in coordination with local partners, that sets a course for implementation at the local level.
 - b. Action Items That Will Require a Long-Term Commitment - These action items may be partially implemented, but further work is required for complete implementation. Some action items are dependent on others being completed, and others will require long-term agency commitment of funding and FTE. In some cases, two or three specialists will be assigned responsibility; in others, larger task groups will be asked to do further analysis and develop actions. These assignments are outlined in the Implementation Action Plan.
 - c. Action Items That Relate to the Interagency Management Review Team (IMRT) - Seven action items will be handled as part of IMRT completion. Six will be combined with IMRT action item 3.6 and one with item 3.7.
4. Wildland/urban interface protection and land management planning are two major components of the implementation effort.
- a. Wildland/urban interface issues have existed for many years, and they will not be solved overnight or by any one entity. However, the recommendations in the report open up some new opportunities.
 - b. It will be important for agencies to work together to make their land and resource management processes compatible and to include in those plans fire management objectives that cross agency jurisdictions.

5. No time frame has been established for full implementation of the more than 80 actions contained in the report; it will be a long-term, ongoing process. While some involve one-time corrections, others involve attitudes and beliefs that must evolve over time and will require continued vigilance.
6. Successful implementation will require the full support and involvement of employees at all levels.
 - a. Geographic Area Coordinating Groups must ensure that implementation is a coordinated effort and there is mutual understanding and ownership among all partners.
 - b. Agency Administrators must be involved in the development of implementation strategies and plans in order to contribute their support, provide reality checks, and develop ownership. They must institutionalize the action items into agency operations.
 - c. Field-level employees are responsible for following through on the ground.

Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review

Q&A's

1. **Q:** *What prompted the review?*

A: Several factors, including:

- The severity of the 1994 fire season that resulted in increased awareness and concern about the dangers of wildland fire and the natural role of wildland fire among land and resource management agencies and the public.
- Outcome of an October 4, 1994, House Agriculture and Natural Resources hearing that established a national commitment by USDA and USDI to address wildland fire issues.
- Recommendations from the October 17, 1994, Report of the Interagency Management Review Team in the wake of the South Canyon Fire Investigation that issues of preparedness, fuels management, and wildland/urban fire protection be examined.
- An August 1994 request by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and Cabinet Affairs for a nationwide review of wildland fire issues.
- Internal concerns stemming from the increasing magnitude and severity of wildland fires and issues revolving around the use of wildland fire to restore forest and rangeland health.

2. **Q:** *What agencies were involved in the review effort and in formulating the new joint policy?*

A: The review was jointly conducted by the Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of the Interior (USDI). Principal agencies from these two Departments included the Forest Service from USDA and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Biological Service, and National Park Service from the USDI. Full partners in this interdepartmental and interagency review included the Environmental Protection Agency, National Weather Service, Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), and FEMA's U.S. Fire Administration.

3. **Q:** *What issues are included in the review?*

A: The review focused on five major policy or program areas, including:

- 1) The role of wildland fire in natural resource management including appropriate strategies for using fire to restore and maintain healthy ecosystems and other societal benefits.
- 2) The deliberate use of wildland fire to meet a number of resource management objectives, from the reduction of fuel hazards (accumulations of flammable dead or living vegetation) to achieving specific responses from fire-dependent plant species, such as the regeneration of aspen.
- 3) Wildland fire protection preparedness and suppression issues such as safe firefighting practices, preparedness planning methods, protection priorities and capability.
- 4) The appropriate role of Federal, state, local, and private organizations in fire protection and management in the wildland/urban interface zone (the area where houses, cabins and other structures mix with the undeveloped wildland).
- 5) Broad coordinated program management issues such as accountability, efficiency, organizational alternatives, weather support, and data management.

4. **Q:** *When was the review initiated?*

A: The Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior signed a joint charter establishing the review effort and designating the senior-level Steering Group on December 30, 1994. Work on the project was initiated early in 1995.

5. **Q:** *Was there any opportunity for public input?*

A: On January 3, 1995, the Steering Group asked for input from the public and employees to help identify issues that should be addressed by the review. This opportunity was announced externally by Federal Register Notice, press release, and letters to individuals and organizations who had expressed past interest in wildland fire issues. Internally employees were apprised of the process via memoranda, electronic bulletin board, and meetings.

Following the identification of issues, four core teams of subject-matter experts representing Federal, State, and local governments, as well as interest groups and private industry, prepared a draft report.

On June 22, 1995, a Draft Report was published in its entirety in the Federal Register. The report also received wide distribution through an external mailing list and to all agency field offices. The Steering Group asked the public and employees for comment on the draft recommendations contained in the report. In order to get the broadest possible input, the comment period, which initially ended on July 24, 1995, was reopened for an additional 45 days, closing on September 25, 1995.

6. **Q: *What are some of the key components of the new Federal Wildland Fire Policy?***

A: The report provides one uniform overall policy under which Federal land management agencies will conduct wildland fire management operations. This will give agencies a stronger foundation upon which to communicate and collaborate with each other and to mutually explore new ways in which cooperation and program effectiveness may be improved. Some of the key components of the new policy include:

- * Reaffirming firefighter and public safety -- human life -- as the #1 priority.
- * Recognizing that wildland fire is neither "bad" nor "good" and that it must be allowed to play its appropriate natural role in the ecosystem.
- * Requiring approved Fire Management Plans for every administrative unit with burnable vegetation, with such plans to address the full range of fire management actions.
- * Requiring any action on a wildland fire to be based upon the direction in the Fire Management Plan.
- * Expanding the emphasis of preparedness planning from fire suppression and protection to supporting land and resource management plans.
- * Changing the rigid protection criteria from 1) life, 2) property, and 3) resource values to 1) life and 2) property and natural/cultural resources, providing administrators the flexibility to weigh the relative values to be protected.
- * Clarifying that an adequate number of trained, certified employees will participate in the wildland fire program, that others will provide support, and that administrators will be held responsible/accountable for results.
- * Clarifying that the Federal role in the wildland/urban interface is wildland firefighting, fuels reduction, education, and technical assistance and that structural protection is generally the responsibility of others -- often Tribal, State, and local governments.
- * Achieving consistency and compatibility in our approach to fire management across agency boundaries for the health of the land and the benefit of those who use the land.

These are just a few of the policy decisions. Each section of the report contains a set of goals and actions that are necessary to accomplish the guiding principles and policies laid out on pages 4 and 5 of the report.

7. **Q: *How will the new policy affect existing agreements?***

A: Existing agreements will continue to remain in effect. As agreements expire or are renegotiated, they will be revised to be consistent with the nine Guiding Principles and the thirteen policy statements that are the foundation of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review report.

8. **Q:** *What was the Western Governors' Association (WGA) role in development of the new fire policy?*

A: Early in the process, public comment indicated the need for State, local, and private involvement in finding and implementing solutions to the escalating problem of fire protection in the wildland/urban interface. In response, the WGA initiated a separate process compatible with the Fire Policy Review to build national consensus and recognition of the significance of this problem and facilitate local partnerships to find and implement creative solutions. The WGA has been successful in bringing State Foresters and Fire Marshals, county officials, representatives from the Insurance Institute For Property Loss Reduction and other underwriters, the building trades industry, academia, members of the Federal government, and other interested groups together for the first time to seek national consensus on fire protection in the interface.

The WGA report will assist Federal agencies in moving forward with fire protection responsibilities in the wildland/urban interface.

9. **Q:** *How does the policy report affect the Federal role in protecting structures in the wildland/urban interface?*

A: The policy report is very specific on this issue. Structural fire protection is the responsibility of other entities – in many cases, Tribal, State, and local governments. The Federal operational role in these areas is wildland firefighting, hazard fuels reduction, and cooperative prevention, education, and technical assistance. Federal agencies may assist with the exterior protection of structures when the respective responsibilities of all parties are defined by written agreement. Some agencies, including the National Park Service, have the responsibility to provide structural fire protection for their own facilities, however.

10. **Q:** *Are Indian trust lands affected by this new policy?*

A: Indian trust lands are recognized as private lands held in trust by the Federal government; Tribal governments possess a "nationhood" status and retain inherent powers of self government. Tribal governments were involved in each step of the public involvement process leading up to the final policy. The final policy report has been sent to each Tribal government for their information. They may choose to adopt the fire management policy and goals contained in the report to meet their individual needs. The policy report recognizes "Tribes" as important partners in the overall wildland fire management equation and continued involvement of Federal agencies with Tribal governments may be expected.

11. **Q:** *Are Department of Defense (DOD) lands affected by the policy?*

A: The DOD manages a significant amount of wildland. They have been apprised of the policy review effort throughout the process, and appropriate DOD staff have been briefed on specific aspects of the policy. They may choose to adopt those policies deemed appropriate for the lands they administer.

12. Q: *What effect will the new policy have on land, resource, and fire planning processes?*

A: The policy calls for wildland fire, as a critical natural process, to be integrated into land and resource management plans. For environmental and economic efficiencies, this is to occur on a broad landscape scale, across agency boundaries. Recommendations to integrate wildland fire into the planning process must be based upon the best available science. Planning decisions regarding wildland fire will consider the need to protect, maintain, and enhance natural resources. New land or resource management plans and plan amendments will be consistent with this policy.

Area- or site-specific Fire Management Plans (FMPs) must be consistent with the overall wildland fire management direction contained in land and resource management plans. FMPs must also address firefighter safety, public safety, and public health. As these plans are revised or written they must be brought into conformance with the new policy. The rate at which all plans are brought into conformance will depend upon agency funding levels.

13. Q: *What is the basis for making the decision to use wildland fire to achieve resource management objectives?*

A: Decisions to use wildland fire to protect, maintain, and enhance resources must be based on an approved land or resource management plan that sets management objectives.

In those geographic areas where land or resource management plans identify a positive role for wildland fire, managers may choose from several options. This may include monitoring or taking less aggressive action to suppress a wildland fire or the management ignition of prescribed fire to meet predetermined management goals.

In those areas where fire would not meet management objectives or would be detrimental to the health of the land or where the risks outweigh the benefits, managers would take aggressive initial-attack action aimed at cost-effective suppression.

14. Q: *Does this new policy open the door to increased arson?*

A: No. Federal land managing agencies have never tolerated arson. The new policy strengthens this commitment. The report contains specific policy requiring federal agencies to work together with state and local governments, groups and individuals to prevent the unauthorized ignition of wildland fires. Lightning-caused or management-ignited prescribed fires must be consistent with land and resource management plans, Fire Management Plans, and human safety, public health, and other appropriate issues.

15. Q: *How much wildland fire use is anticipated?*

A: An estimate of the acreage on which wildland fire may be used to restore and maintain healthy ecosystems and reduce fuel hazards cannot be made at this time. This estimate would be available when areas that are suitable for wildland fire reintroduction have been identified and when future budget capability is known.

16. Q: *How can the public get involved in the decisions to use wildland fire to maintain and improve the condition of wildlands?*

A: The public will be invited to participate in the land and resource management planning process where the goals and objectives for the appropriate role of wildland fire are set. This includes plan amendments. Also, the public will be invited to participate in the development of environmental assessments that deal with wildland fire activities.

17. Q: *How will agency administrators and fire managers be held accountable for the wildland fire management program?*

A: Agencies will increase the experience and qualification requirements of agency administrators and fire management personnel through training, job details, and job performance guidelines to ensure they have the requisite skills. In addition, fire management job qualifications will be based upon program complexity and be staffed by agency administrators and fire management personnel who meet these qualifications.

In response, agencies will ensure accountability to manage a safe and efficient program based on standard job performance requirements. These requirements will include items specifically related to safety, recognize and reward success, and provide disciplinary action for failure.

18. Q: *How will recommendations in this report affect the safety of firefighters?*

A: The first guiding principle and first policy statement reinforce that firefighter and public safety is the first priority in every fire management activity. By policy, all Fire Management Plans must reflect this commitment; and, once people have been committed to an incident or a prescribed fire, these resources become the highest value to be protected.

19. Q: *What is fire's natural role in ecosystems and why do we need to be concerned about this?*

A: More than a century of fire exclusion, combined with past land-use practices, have altered the landscape. This has resulted in changes such as a heavy build-up of dead vegetation, dense stands of trees, a shift to species that have not evolved and adapted to fire, and, in some cases, even an increase in non-native fire-prone plants. Because of these conditions, today's fires tend to be larger, burn hotter, and spread farther and faster, making them more severe, more dangerous, and more costly in human, economic, and ecologic terms.

The goal of the fire policy is to restore the natural balance by adopting land management practices that integrate fire into ecosystems as an essential natural process. Fire can be used to reduce the build-up of dead and downed trees and curb insect and disease infestations, while releasing and recycling nutrients essential for the growth and reproduction of many plant species.

20. Q: *What other tools can Federal agencies use to reduce fuel hazards?*

A: Many areas need immediate treatment of both live and dead vegetation in order to prevent large, damaging, high-intensity fires. In addition to wildland fire, fuel treatment in these areas may be accomplished by mechanical, chemical, biological, and manual means. In some areas, fuel accumulations may be so heavy that use of wildland fire may not be practical. In these cases pretreatment of the area by another means may be necessary before wildland fire may be applied. A combination of methods may be necessary to cost-effectively reduce fuel hazards in order to achieve ecosystem health and resource benefits.

21. Q: *Who is responsible for ensuring that the recommendations are implemented consistently?*

A: An interagency Management Oversight Team was established to oversee the implementation. It includes top-level representatives from each of the five Federal land management agencies – the Bureau of Land Management, USDA Forest Service, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs – as well as the National Biological Service and the National Association of State Foresters. Agencies will be guided by an Implementation Action Plan dated May 23, 1996.

22. Q: *How long will it take to implement the recommendations?*

A: The time required for implementation will vary. Some items that help to clarify or enforce current policy or program operations may be dealt with very quickly. Others that are a significant departure from current operations may require extensive collaboration across agency lines and with our non-Federal partners and will take longer to implement or will be a long-term, ongoing process. While some actions are one-time corrections, others involve attitudes and beliefs that must evolve over time and will require continued vigilance.

23. Q: *What actions may be taken in response to the policy report this field season?*

A: Agency administrators will ensure that all training, preparedness planning, and fire management planning reflects a commitment to firefighter and public safety as the first priority. To the extent possible, preparedness planning and pre-season reviews of existing Fire Management Plans and agreements included an evaluation of compatibility with the guiding principles and policies reflected in the report. Where appropriate, fire as a critical natural process will be integrated into new land and resource management plans and into efforts to revise and maintain existing plans. In addition, the nine Guiding Principles that are the foundation of the Federal wildland fire management program will influence all wildland fire decisions.



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

P.O. Box 37127

Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

IN REPLY REFER TO:

Y14(2460)

JUL 23 1996

Memorandum

To: Field Directors
System Support Office Superintendents
Park Superintendents

From: Associate Director, Park Operations and Education *Maureen J. Jernstedt*

Subject: Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program
Review Implementation

The Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review (Policy Review) report was issued in December 1995. At that time, the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture directed all land management bureaus to develop a joint strategy to implement the Policy Review.

The Policy Review Implementation Action Plan (Action Plan) defines the strategy and tactics to be used in implementing the Policy Review recommendations. All field offices are to begin implementing the Action Plan immediately.

Fire management cannot be left to implement the Action Plan items on its own. The involvement, commitment and development of ownership by agency administrators at all organizational levels as well as that of other program managers is critical to the effectiveness and success of the implementation of the Action Plan.

There will be many people responsible for institutionalizing the Policy Review recommendations, but the key is the involvement and commitment of park managers.

To successfully implement the Action Plan will also require close coordination with our State, Tribal and local cooperators. We must maintain a high degree of sensitivity with regard to these partners and recognize that they may not be able to implement some Action Plan items due to legal or budgetary constraints.

The Action Plan is organized into three groups of action items. The first group is tasked to various geographic area coordination groups for immediate implementation. Most of these Action Plan items can be implemented under existing policy and funding levels. These will require interagency cooperation to develop a geographic implementation plan by December 30, 1996. Included in the geographic area implementation plan should be a mechanism for tracking implementation progress and a reporting system from each geographic area Federal representative.



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, D.C. 20240

MRPS POLICY BULLETIN 96-03 Wildland Fire Protection Priorities

Date: July 3, 1996

To: Heads of Bureaus and Offices

From: Director, Office of Managing Risk and Public Safety

Effective immediately, DM 910, 1.6A(1) and 1.6A(5)(b) are changed to conform with the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review approved by the Secretary of the Interior on December 15, 1995, and which recommended protection priorities to be: (1) human life and (2) property and natural/cultural resources.

The protection of human life shall remain the first priority once people have been committed to an incident, these personnel resources become the highest value to be protected. The second priority, property and natural/cultural resources, shall have the same value. If it becomes necessary to prioritize between property and natural/cultural resources, this will be done based on relative values to be protected, commensurate with fire management costs.

The bureaus and offices of the Department with responsibility for wildland fire management are to take appropriate steps to implement these protection priorities immediately, in coordination and conjunction with other federal and non-federal agencies.

This change will remain in effect for one year or until superseded by a DM release.

Point of contact is Wally Josephson, 202-208-6891.

Implementation Communication Package: How to Use It

The nine-page Implementation Communication Package is intended as a "menu" of strategies and tools to guide field offices in their internal and external communications. Its five attachments are to be used as "camera-ready" originals for reproduction and internal/external distribution as appropriate:

- External Brochure
 - Camera-ready original, "Answers for Public Land Users and Neighbors" - To be copied as needed to inform external audiences about the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review.
 - Example of copied, folded brochure ready for distribution to the public as appropriate.
- Internal Brochure
 - Camera-ready original, "Answers for Employees" - To be copied as needed to inform employees about the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review.
 - Example of copied, folded brochure ready for distribution to employees as appropriate.
- Press Release - Draft press release to be used as is or localized as appropriate.
- Fact Sheet - For use by agency administrators, managers, public affairs specialists, and others as a quick reference about the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review.
- Questions & Answers - For use by agency administrators, managers, public affairs specialists, and others to assist in answering questions about the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review.

If you have questions about the Communication Package or need additional copies of any of the documents, please contact Pat Entwistle, National Interagency Fire Center, (208) 387-5437.